

# **Proposed Resource Management Plan Amendment and Final Environmental Impact Statement White River Field Office Oil and Gas Development**

**Lead Agency:** U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management

**Type of Action:** Administrative

**Jurisdiction:** Portions of Rio Blanco, Garfield, and Moffat Counties, Colorado

**Abstract:** This Proposed Resource Management Plan Amendment/Final Environmental Impact Statement (RMPA/Final EIS) for Oil and Gas Development describes and analyzes alternatives for the planning and management of public lands and resources administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), White River Field Office (WRFO).

Five alternatives for the RMPA are considered in the Proposed RMPA/Final EIS. Alternative A is a continuation of current management goals, objectives, and direction specified in the 1997 White River RMP; however, the analysis updates the 20-year development projection from the 1997 White River RMP to reflect the 2007 Reasonable Foreseeable Development (RFD) scenario. Resources and resource programs analyzed development projection of up to 550 well pads with an associated long-term disturbance of 6,600 acres. Alternative B evaluates limiting the duration and overall extent of development activities, through a managed development approach, in order to maintain existing resource conditions throughout all phases of development. The BLM would apply additional management actions to further protect the environment for these resources. Implementation of Alternative B could result in up to 1,100 well pads. Associated surface disturbance resulting from this level of development would total 13,200 acres. Alternative C emphasizes short-term use of the environment, with a managed development approach emphasizing the maintenance and enhancement of long-term community function and ecological integrity. This alternative projects development of up to 1,800 well pads with an associated surface disturbance totaling 21,600 acres. The management focus of Alternative D is the development of oil and gas resources, with an emphasis on the production of oil and gas resources under the environmental protection for other resources afforded by applicable laws, regulations, and BLM policy. Implementation of Alternative D is assumed to result in up to 2,556 new well pads with an associated surface disturbance of approximately 30,700 acres. The Proposed Amendment, Alternative E, combines elements of Alternatives A, B, C, and D. In acknowledging a trend for an increasing number of wells per pad, Alternative E reflects surface disturbance associated with development that would be similar to Alternative B (1,100 well pads or 13,200 acres) while allowing for well numbers anticipated under Alternative C (15,040 wells). The majority of development is expected to occur within the Mesaverde Play Area (MPA), with approximately 972 well pads within the MPA and 128 well pads outside the MPA. When completed, the RMPA will provide a set of comprehensive, long-range decisions for: (1) managing resources throughout the Planning Area and (2) identifying allowable uses on the public land surface and federal mineral estate administered by the BLM.

The publication of the Notice of Availability (NOA) initiates a 60-day Governor's Consistency Review to identify inconsistencies with state or local plans and a 30-day protest period under 43 CFR 1610.5-2. Members of the public with standing will have the opportunity to protest the content of the Proposed RMPA and Final EIS during the specified 30-day protest period. The State Director of the BLM may sign and implement that portion of the plan not under protest. Once protests have been resolved and the Governor's Consistency Review has been completed, the State

Director can approve the RMPA by signing a Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD will be issued by the BLM following the Governor's Consistency Review and protest resolution. The RMPA would be continually monitored and evaluated until it is replaced or modified by another plan.

**For Further Information Contact:** Heather Sauls – Planning and Environmental Coordinator  
Bureau of Land Management, White River Field Office  
220 East Market Street  
Meeker, CO 81641  
(970) 878-3855